Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete) December 17, 2023

From the Desk of Fr. Leo

Toward the end of World War II, a squad of soldiers came to a little Italian village that had been bitterly fought over. In the village square, they found a statue of Christ lying on the ground, battered and broken. Some of the soldiers put it together as best as they could and set it back on its pedestal. But they could not find the hands. Finally, one from the group made a crudely lettered sign which read, "I HAVE NO OTHER HANDS BUT YOURS." Truly, the Christians are the living hands of Christ. They ought always to point to Christ by word and example.

When St. John the Baptist appeared on the scene, he soon won a large following. What attracted the crowds was both the appearance of the man and his intriguing message. St. John practiced what he preached. He was not clothed in fine garments, but in camel's hair which is rough and for a belt he wore a strip of skin that had been tanned. His food was that of the wilderness: honey extracted from wild bees' nests, and roasted grasshoppers. A more rugged picture of an ascetic can hardly be drawn. Yet this is what drew the crowds, for they knew that the prophets of old practiced rugged asceticism and were close to God. The people were hungry for God.

St. John the Baptist was a man of singular caliber. The crowds could not help being attracted by this gaunt ascetical figure, so utterly detached from material comforts in his dress and food habits, so fearless in denouncing the real culprits as "a brood of vipers", so gentle and understanding toward the common person, be he a soldier, official, or ordinary laborer.

The Church needs men and women today who will be witnesses to Christ the Light in all its stark reality: who are not afraid to stand up for the truth of the Gospel (not watering it down to suit the tastes of contemporaries); undaunted in upholding the law of God in the many and varied moral issues of the day which is not always the case in the so-called "theology of compassion"). Who know how, like St. John, to demand much of themselves but are gentle and understanding of others' weaknesses; and whose one goal is not self nor self-advancement, but solely Christ the Lord, in whose light they suffuse, that clear light of a witness sent by God.

There is no need to look for extraordinary opportunities to bear witness to Christ the Light. This is best done in the little situations of the day, at home or at work, in school or at play: the honest word, the correct answer; a courageous not when affinity or friendship demands, which are contrary to the ideals of Christ, a fearless example when leadership is needed; a teacher's faith professed, a parents' belief manifested. These and many other ways prove the true witnesses to the one who is the Light Divine.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**December 19**	**11:00AM**
Joseph Rodillo †		Carmella
Wed.	**December 20**	**11:00AM**
Living Memorial		
Thur.	**December 21**	**11:00AM**
Paolo Coccé †		Sylvia
Fri.	**December 22**	**11:00AM**
Angelina & Carolos Moniz †		Lisa & Family
Sat.	**December 23**	**4:30PM**
Thanksgiving		
Sun.	**December 24**	**9:00AM**
People of the Parish		
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		

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